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GENERAL AND COMPLETE DISARMAMENT

Conventional disarmament on a regional scale

Report of the Secretary-General

Addendum

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* A/47/150.

** On behalf of the European Community and its member States.

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AUSTRALIA

[Original: English]

[11 August 1992]

1. Australia's policy on conventional disarmament on a regional scale echoes its global approach. The Government's view is that regional efforts, while contributing to global measures, should not supplant them. Nevertheless, the Government reaffirms the importance of regional measures, illustrated by Australia's efforts to engage in a comprehensive security dialogue with Asia-Pacific countries that could, among other things, create the conditions for regional conventional disarmament agreements.

2. The Asia-Pacific region has seen increases in defence expenditure in recent years. It is, however, difficult to make sweeping judgements about the nature of these increases. Although States have legitimate self-defence requirements, the Government of Australia would like to see military expenditure kept to a minimum both globally and regionally. To this end the Government supports efforts, such as the establishment of the United Nations Register of International Conventional Arms Transfers, to promote openness and transparency in military activities. This can help reduce suspicions and build confidence, thereby removing some of the forces that motivate arms races. The Government of Australia has urged its neighbours to support and contribute to the register.

3. The Indian Ocean region is less advanced with regard to regional security cooperation than the Asia-Pacific. Proliferation in the Middle East and South Asia remains a concern.

4. The Middle East peace process, through the efforts of the multilateral working groups that in the arms control and disarmament area are focusing on confidence-building measures and dialogue, offers some hope to that region. Countries with experience in the arms control field, including Australia, can contribute to this process. The region's problems also illustrate how regional conflicts cannot be isolated from global security concerns.

5. Australia's approach is to think in terms of common security rather than confrontational security. Common security implies that while each country has to assess and protect its legitimate security interests it also has to avoid generating, through its own actions, security anxieties and military reactions on the part of other countries.

6. Australia is engaging in dialogue with its neighbours in order to promote the notion that security is a product not just of military expenditure and alliances, but of an interlocking web of contacts built through dialogue arrangements and cooperative strategies. Partners can exchange views on strategic perceptions and planning through such dialogue, and in doing so arrive at shared assessments that can help reduce their insecurity and check trends towards competitive arms acquisition.

UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND*

[Original: English]

[6 August 1992]

I. REGIONAL DISARMAMENT AND GLOBAL SECURITY: ELEMENTS FOR A REGIONAL APPROACH TO ARMS CONTROL AND DISARMAMENT WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF GLOBAL SECURITY

Aim

1. The aim of the present contribution is to update and put into perspective principles and measures that would be taken into account for the purpose of regional arms control and disarmament efforts as suggested by the working paper submitted by the Netherlands on behalf of the Twelve States members of the European Communities on regional disarmament and global security on 29 April 1991 (A/CN.10/154).

2. These proposals, which are of continuing relevance, were made drawing on practical experience in various regions of the world and recognizing that they must be considered in the context of global security.

3. Furthermore, recent developments in the field of regional arms control and disarmament measures have been reviewed.

II. BASIC PRINCIPLES FOR A REGIONAL APPROACH TO DISARMAMENT WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF GLOBAL SECURITY

4. The adoption of regional arms control and disarmament measures is one of the most effective ways for States to contribute to the general arms control and disarmament process.

5. The search for regional security structures and measures to encourage stability and peace should be pursued in order to enhance security at the lowest possible level of military forces. This search should be accompanied by joint efforts to forestall the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, to restrain from transfers of conventional weapons and to promote economic and social progress.

6. The regional approach to arms control and disarmament should take into account legitimate national defence requirements in accordance with the right of self-defence as laid down in Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations.

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* On behalf of the European Community and its member States.

7. It is in the interest of regional security if States base their defence policies on military capabilities sufficient for individual or collective self-defence.

A. Regional and global disarmament

8. Arms control and disarmament achievements at regional level may facilitate progress towards the ultimate goal of general and complete disarmament under effective international control.

9. The regional approach to disarmament is one of the essential elements in global efforts to achieve peace and security. In that regard regional provisions should take into consideration interdependence between neighbouring regions. Positive results in one region should not have harmful effects on others. Arms control and disarmament agreements between regions would also enhance global security.

10. Regional measures should also take into account the relationship between security in the region and international security as a whole.

11. The international community should respect and support regional arrangements in accordance with Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations.

B. Regional stability and characteristics

12. Regional arms control and disarmament measures should contribute to, and increase, stability within a region.

13. Regional arms control and disarmament requires a common approach on security goals by States involved.

14. Regional disarmament efforts should interact positively with bilateral and other regional political initiatives to build confidence and to prevent imbalances and tensions in one area from spreading to other areas.

15. Initiatives should take into account particular characteristics of each region and should lead to stability and security for all the participating States. All the States in the region should respect each other's right to choose and to develop freely their political and security systems as long as they are in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations and generally recognized principles of international law.

16. One essential principle would therefore be to give priority, in any regional disarmament process, to the elimination of the most destabilizing military capabilities and imbalances.

C. Rights of participating States

17. Regional arms control and disarmament provisions should not violate the principles of sovereignty, political independence and unity of States.

18. Regional arms control and disarmament effort should build on the principle of sovereign equality for the States in the region. States will have to respect each other's right to choose freely and to develop their political and security systems in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations.

D. Peaceful settlement of disputes

19. Regional arms control and disarmament should be consistent with the principle of the peaceful settlement of disputes.

20. The obligation of States to refrain from the threat or use of force is vital for the maintenance and consolidation of peace and security in a region.

E. Transparency

21. Transparency and openness are essential to progress in regional arms control and disarmament. They should also include the need to increase awareness of military activities and capabilities, as well as objective information on them, in order to enhance predictability and reduce the risk of misinterpretation and miscalculation. Transparency, openness and restraint are of the utmost importance for the creation of a climate conducive to realistic measures dealing with arms transfers.

F. Practical steps and undiminished security

22. Arms control and disarmament arrangements can be pursued more effectively through an approach whereby States within the region engage in pragmatic and specific practical steps, if necessary using a phased approach.

23. However, such an approach must respect the principle of undiminished security for all participants at all stages in the process.

24. To develop practical steps towards increased regional security; those elements which are the main source of instability and a threat to peace and security within the region should be identified.

25. Confidence-building measures designed to contribute to transparency and predictability of military activities could be considered within the regions, at bilateral and multilateral levels, in order to facilitate further agreements.

26. Such measures as notification of large-scale military activities and exchange of military data, within the context of the particular region, could reduce the risk of misinterpretation and miscalculation.

G. Mutual confidence

27. To build up and to strengthen mutual confidence is a long-term task for any regional group of States.

28. Arms control and disarmament measures can contribute to the building and strengthening of confidence. However, such measures cannot be fully successful if considered alone.

29. Complementary political cooperation in pertinent areas would enhance the building of confidence.

H. Respect for international obligations

30. Regional arms control and disarmament should be advanced by the commitment of all participants to fulfil in good faith obligations under the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations and other relevant treaties, agreements and international law. Implementation of arms control and disarmament measures must not be impaired by circumvention.

III. POSSIBLE MEASURES TO FACILITATE AND ACHIEVE REGIONAL DISARMAMENT WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF GLOBAL SECURITY

A. Initiatives from within the region

31. Initiatives for regional arms control and disarmament arrangements should come from within, and be developed by, the region itself.

32. Whilst initiatives from outside can act as catalysts, regional States concerned must be in a position to accept and support such initiatives in order to create the necessary momentum to make progress.

33. Agreement among all States of the region itself is essential to ensure the success of such arrangements.

B. Elimination of destabilizing military capabilities

34. In the framework of regional arms control and disarmament agreements, emphasis should be put on the elimination of the capacity to launch surprise attacks and large-scale offensive military operations.

C. Arms transfers

35. Disarmament measures in one region should not lead to increased arms transfers to other regions.

36. All States should contribute comprehensive information to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms with a view to achieving more transparency and enhancing restraint in this field.

D. Verification

37. Appropriate verification measures for the implementation of regional arms control and disarmament agreements and treaties are essential.

E. Declarations

38. Declarations of non-use of force or threat of force can play a part in creating a climate of confidence based on mutual respect and aimed at ensuring better relations founded on solidarity and cooperation.

F. Regional mechanisms

39. Establishment of regional mechanisms or arrangements to further the cause of prevention of conflicts and peaceful settlement of disputes should be considered.

40. In addition, the United Nations should be enabled to play a greater role in the dissemination of information on regional arms control and disarmament measures.

41. Regional centres could make subtantial contributions in this regard.

G. Informing the Security Council

42. In accordance with Article 54 of the Charter of the United Nations, the Security Council should be informed of "activities undertaken or in contemplation under regional arrangements or by regional agencies for the maintenance of international peace and security".

IV. RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE FIELD OF REGIONAL ARMS CONTROL AND DISARMAMENT MEASURES

43. The CSCE process, now comprising 52 States, and the CFE Treaty are examples of positive measures in promoting peace and stability in a particular region which could serve as an interesting reference framework for other regions.

44. Participants in the CFE 1 negotiations have reached an agreement to limit the personnel strength of the conventional armed forces within the area of application. The concluding act has been signed at the Helsinki summit and will take effect simultaneously with the entry into force of the CFE Treaty.

45. In this context, the adoption of the Vienna Document of 1992 and the Treaty on Open Skies of March 1992 will contribute significantly to further confidence-building in Europe and beyond. Especially the latter, with its application on the territory of all signatories, is a clear example of the potential of regional measures becoming global instruments of confidence-building.

46. Furthermore, the enhancement of regional mechanisms of conflict prevention and crisis management is being considered as well as the elaboration of peaceful settlement of disputes, such as conciliation and arbitration. Ways of introducing arms control and disarmament measures at a regional and subregional level are actively being explored in the framework of the post-Helsinki security forum in which 52 States of the CSCE will take part.

47. Recent developments in Africa of particular interest might be the recent decision of OAU to adopt in principle the establishment, within the framework of OAU, of a mechanism for preventing, managing and resolving conflicts in Africa. This mechanism has a potential for arms control and disarmament in the region. Recent agreements in Angola and the ongoing talks at Rome aimed at achieving peace in Mozambique are also to be welcomed.